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AN

ADDRESS

TO THE

People of Great Britain.

BY R. WATSON,

LORD BISHOP OF LANDAFF.

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People of Great Britain,

&c. &c.

My fellow-countrymen,

THE sentiments which I shall, in this address, take the liberty of stating to you on some interesting points, will, I hope, meet with your candid attention; if not from their worth, from the consideration that they are the sentiments of an independent man. I am neither the friend or enemy of any party in the state; and am so far an impracticable man, that on all public questions of importance I will follow the dictates of my own individual judgement. No favour which I could receive from this or from any administration would induce me to support measures which I disliked; nor will any neglect I may expe-

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rience impel me to oppose measures which I approve.

A new system of finance has this year been introduced; and I fairly own it has my approbation as far as it goes. It has given great discontent to many; but it has given none to me. I lament, as every man must do, the necessity of imposing so heavy a burthen on the community; and, with a family of eight children, I shall feel its pressure as much as most men: but I am so far from censuring the minister for having done so much, that I sincerely wish he had done a great deal more. In the present situation of Great Britain, and of Europe, palliatives are of no use, half-measures cannot save us. Instead of calling for a tenth of a man's income, I wish the minister had called for a tenth or for such other portion of every man's whole property as would have enabled him not merely to make a temporary provision for the war, but to have paid off, in a few years, the whole or the greatest part of the national debt.

A million a year has been wisely set apart for the reduction of the debt; and had we continued at peace, its operation would have been beneficially felt in a few years: but, in our present circumstances, and with an expectation of the recurrency of war at short periods, it is not one, two or three millions a year, that can preserve us from bankruptcy. We had better struggle to effect the extinction of the debt in five years than in fifty, though our exertion, during the shorter period, should be proportionably greater.

A nation is but a collection of individuals united into one body for mutual benefit; and a national debt is a debt belonging to every individual, in proportion to the property he possesses; and every individual may be justly called upon for his quota towards the liquidation of it. No man, relatively speaking, will be either richer or poorer by this payment being generally made, for riches and poverty are relative terms: and when all the members of a community are proportionably reduced, the relation between the individuals, as to the *quantum* of each man's property,

remaining unaltered, the individuals themselves will feel no elevation or depression in the scale of society. When all the foundations of a great building sink uniformly, the symmetry of the parts is not injured; the pressure on each member remains as it was; no rupture is made: the building will not be so lofty, but it may stand on a better bottom. It does not require an oracle to inform us (though an oracle has said it) that riches have been the ruin of every country; they banish the simplicity of manners, they corrupt the morals, of a people, and they invite invaders. If we pay the national debt, we may not live quite so luxuriously as we have done; but this change will be no detriment either to our virtue as men, or to our safety as members of society.

I consider the property of men united in society so far to belong to the state, that any portion of it may be justly called for by the legislature, for the promotion of the common good; and it is then most equitably called for, when all individuals, possessing property of any kind, contribute in proportion to their

possessions. This is a principle so obviously just, that it is attended to as much as possible in every scheme of finance; and it would be the universal rule of taxation, in every country, could the property of individuals be exactly ascertained. Much objection is made to the obliging men to discover the amount of their property; but I have never heard a sufficient reason in support of the objection. I can see a reason why merchants, tradesmen, contractors, money-jobbers, who deal in large speculations on credit, and without an adequate capital, should be unwilling to disclose their property; but I do not so clearly see what mischief would arise to the community if they were obliged to do it.

The value of every man's landed property is easily known; the value of his monied property in the funds is known; and his monied property in mortgages and bonds might as easily be known, if an act of parliament was passed, rendering no mortgage or bond legal which was not registered. The greatest difficulty would be in ascertaining the value of stock in trade: but a jury of

neighbours co-operating with the probity of merchants and manufacturers, and that regard for character which generally distinguishes men in business, would settle that point.

I have lately conversed with a variety of men, in different stations, and in different parts of the kingdom, and have scarcely met with one among the landed gentry, and with none among the manufacturers, tradesmen, farmers, and artificers of the country, who has not declared that he had much rather pay his portion of the principal of the national debt, than be harrassed with the taxes destined for the payment of the interest of it. This is true patriotism, and good sense; and were we in our present circumstances to discharge the whole, or the greatest part of the national debt, all Europe would admire our magnanimity; and France herself would tremble at the idea of subjugating so high-spirited a people.

The minister, I am persuaded, is too enlightened not to have considered this subject; and objections may have occurred to him,

which have not occurred to me. I have ventured to state it for general consideration; that it may not be quite new, if we should at length be compelled to have recourse to such an expedient. There would be some difficulty in ascertaining every man's property; but where there is a willing mind to remove difficulties, they are seldom insurmountable. The modifications which the bill for increasing the assessed taxes has undergone, are numerous, and in general judicious; and are a proof that the most perplexing difficulties yield to impartial and deliberative wisdom.

One modification has not been noticed; at least, I have not seen it stated in so clear a manner as it might be stated; and I will mention it, as not undeserving attention, if the business should ever be resumed in another form.—Permanent income arises either from the rent of land, or from the interest of money, or from an annuity. The annuitants are very numerous in the kingdom. Possessors of entailed estates, widows with jointures, the bishops and clergy, the judges and

possessors of patent places during life, the officers of the army and navy, and many others under different denominations, support themselves upon property terminating with their lives. The lives of possessors of annuities may, taking the old and the young together, be worth twelve years purchase. An annuitant then, who has an income of 100l. and no other property, is worth 1200l.; so that in paying a tenth of his income, he pays an hundred and twentieth part of his whole property. A person possessed of an income of 100l. arising from a property of 2000l. let out at an interest of 5l. per cent. in paying a tenth of his income, pays a two hundredth part of his property. A person possessing an income of 100l. arising from land, in paying a tenth of his income, pays (estimating land at thirty years purchase) a three hundredth part of his property. Men under these different descriptions pay equally, though their properties are unequal in the proportion of six, ten, and fifteen.

Much objection also has on all hands been made to the touching of the funds by taxation:

but I own that I do not see any sufficient reason why property in the funds may not be as justly as any other property subject to the disposal of the legislature. I make this observation with perfect impartiality; for a considerable part of the little property I possess is in the funds. Parliament has pledged the nation to the payment of the interest of the money which has been borrowed, till the principal is paid off; but when the debt is become so great, that the rental of the kingdom will scarcely pay the interest of it, I do not see any breach of contract, any want of equity, in the legislature of the country saying to the public creditor—the possessors of land are giving up a tenth or a twentieth part of all they are worth for the public service; the possessors of houses, of stock in trade, of mortgages and bonds, are doing the same thing—what reason can be given why you should be exempted? You plead the faith of Parliament.—Be it so! Parliament preserves its faith with you; for if Parliament should with one hand pay you your principal, it might lay hold of it with the other, and make you as liable as other men possessing money,

to pay your proportion ; and does it not come to the same thing, whether your whole principal is paid, and a portion of it is taken back again, or whether your principal is diminished by that portion, and you receive the stipulated interest, till the remainder is discharged ?

Frederick II. in speaking of France about twenty years ago, observed, that there were three things which hindered France from re-assuming that ascendancy in the affairs of Europe which she had possessed from the time of Henry IV.—the enormity of her debt—exhausted resources—and taxes multiplied in an excessive manner. The two last are the offspring of the first ; but the monarch's observation is applicable to every other nation under the same circumstances, and to ourselves as well as to others. If we pay our debt by judicious installments, we shall neither run the risk of the government being broken up, as it was in France, by the discontents of the people, and an inability to go on ; nor shall we cripple our commerce by the high price of labour and provisions ; nor shall

we be depopulated by emigrations to America or France; but we shall preserve the importance we possess in Europe, and renovate the strength and vigour of the body politic.

But I will not detain you longer on this point, there is another, of great importance, to which I wish to turn your attention.

Whatever doubts I formerly entertained, or (notwithstanding all I have read or heard on the subject) may still entertain, either on the justice or the necessity of commencing this war in which we are engaged, I entertain none on the present necessity and justice of continuing it. Under whatever circumstances the war was begun, it is now become just; since the enemy has refused to treat, on equitable terms, for the restoration of peace. Under whatever circumstances of expediency or inexpediency the war was commenced, its continuance is now become necessary; for what necessity can be greater than that which arises from the enemy having threatened us with destruction as a nation?

Here I may, probably, be told that, allowing the war to be just, it is still not necessary, but perfectly inexpedient. I may have it rung in my ears that the French are an overmatch for us, that it is better to submit at once to the most ignominious terms of peace than to see another *Brennus* weighing out the bullion of the Bank, and insulting the misery of the nation with a “ woe to the vanquished.” I admit the conclusion of the alternative to be just, but I do not admit the truth of the principle from which it is derived—I do not admit that the French are an overmatch for us.

I am far enough from affecting knowledge in military matters; but every man knows that men and money are the sinews of war, and that victory in the field is achieved by the valour of troops and the skill of commanders. Now in which of these four particulars is France our superior? You will answer at once, she is superior in the number of men. The population, I know, of the two countries has been generally estimated in the proportion of

three to one : but though this should be admitted to have been the true proportion of the population, and of the men capable of bearing arms, in the beginning of the war, I think it is not the true proportion at present. Both countries have lost great numbers ; but France, instead of losing three times, has, I apprehend, lost above ten times as many men as we have done ; so that the proportion of men capable of bearing arms remaining in France, compared with what Great Britain can furnish, does not, I am persuaded, exceed that of two to one. And, were there even a bridge over the channel, France durst not make an incursion with half her numbers. She knows how ready her neighbours would be to revenge the injuries they have sustained,—how ready her own citizens would be to regain the blessings they have lost, could they once see all her forces occupied in a distant country. France, I repeat it, were there even a bridge from Calais to Dover, could not send into the field as many men as we could oppose against her.

But, it may be urged, all the men in France

are foldiers—No; some are left to till the ground, some to sustain the languors of her commerce, some to perish in prison, deploring the misery of their country. So many, I acknowledge, are become foldiers in France, that we must, in a great degree, imitate her example. Every man who can be spared from the agriculture, the manufactures, and the commerce of the country, must become a soldier, if we mean to face the enemy in a proper manner, if empire or servitude are to be fairly fought for.

As to money, I need not enter into any comparative discussion on that head. France has no means within herself of providing for her armies—She intends to send them into this country either that she may pay them, as she has done in Italy, by plunder, or, in the true spirit of despair, cancel her debts, by sacrificing the persons of her soldiers.

With respect to the valour of the French troops, I have nothing to object. I know it is a favourite opinion with many, that the French are now what their ancestors were in

the time of Cæsar; “that in the *first* onset
 “they are more than men, but in the *second*
 “less than women.” But it appears to me,
 I must confess, that in this war the French
 have sustained with courage *many onsets*:—
 praise is due to the galantry even of an
 enemy. But if I were asked, whether an
 equal number of Englishmen would beat
 these conquerors of Italy, I would answer,
 as an English ambassador answered a King
 of Prussia, when, at a review of his forces,
 he asked the ambassador, “whether he
 “thought that an equal number of English-
 “men could beat his Prussians.”—“I can-
 “not tell, (replied the ambassador) whether
 “an equal number would beat them; but I
 “am certain half the number would try.”—
 I have the firmest confidence that fifty thou-
 sand Englishmen, fighting for their wives and
 children, for their liberty and property, as
 individuals, for the independence and consti-
 tution of their country, would, without he-
 sitation, attack an hundred thousand French-
 men.

As to the relative skill of the commanders,
 it would ill become me to give any opinion

upon that point. If I were to admit that the French generals are not inferior to our own in martial ability, yet in the local knowledge of the country, and in the correctness and fidelity of the information they will receive, ours will certainly have the advantage.

But if the French are not our superiors, either in men or money, in the valour of their soldiers, or the skill of their commanders, what have we to apprehend, should we be forced to fight them on our own ground? A thousand evils, no doubt, attend a country becoming the seat of war, to which we are strangers, and to which, through the good providence of God, and the energy of our navy, we shall long, I trust, continue strangers. But should the matter happen otherwise, should the enemy, by any untoward accident, land their forces, I see no reason why we should despair of our country, if we are only faithful to ourselves, if, forgetting, all party animosity, we stand collected as one man against them.

Many honest men, I am sensible, have

been alarmed into a belief, that were the French to invade this country, they would be joined by great numbers of discontented men. This is not my opinion. That they would be joined by a few of the worst men in the country, by thieves and robbers, and outcasts of society, is probable enough ; but that any individual, possessing either property or character, that any respectable body of men, would so far indulge their discontents, as to ruin their country and themselves, in gratifying their resentment, is what nothing but experience can convince me of.

I have heard of a Dissenter in Yorkshire, (a man of great wealth and estimation), who, on the last rejection of the petition for the repeal of the test-act, declared that he would go all lengths to carry his point---but I consider this declaration as made during the irritation of the moment, and as opposite to the general principles of that body of men. The Dissenters have on trying occasions shewn their attachment to the house of Brunswick and the principles of the revolution ; and I should think myself guilty of calumny, if I

should say that they had in any degree abandoned either their attachment or their principles, or were disposed to join the invaders of their country.

There is another set of men whom it seems the fashion of the day to represent as enemies of the state, to stigmatize as republicans, levellers, jacobins. But vulgar traduction of character, party-coloured representation of principle, make no impression on my mind; nor ought they to make any impression on yours. The most respectable of those who are anxious for the reform of parliament have not, in my judgement, any views hostile to the constitution. They may, perhaps, be mistaken in believing an effectual reform practicable, without a revolution; but few of them, I am persuaded, would be disposed to attain their object with such a consequence accompanying it; and fewer still would wish to make the experiment under the auspices of a French invader.

There may be some real republicans in the

kingdom; their number, I am convinced, is extremely small; and they are, probably, republicans more in theory than practice; they are, probably, of the same sentiments with the late Dr. Price, who, being asked a few months before his death, whether he really wished to see a republic established in England, answered in the negative. “ He “ preferred,” (he said,) “ a republican “ to a monarchical form of government, “ when the constitution was to be formed “ anew, as in America; but, in old established governments, such as England, he “ thought the introduction of a republic “ would cost more than it was worth, would “ be attended with more mischief than advantage.”

I have a firm persuasion that the French will find themselves disappointed, if they expect to be supported in their expedition by the discontented in this country. They have already made a trial; the event of it should lower their confidence; the Welch, of all denominations, rushed upon their Gallic enemies, with the impetuosity of ancient

Britons; they discomfited them in a moment; they covered them with shame, and led them into captivity. The common people in this fortunate island, enjoy more liberty, more consequence, more comfort of every kind, than the common people of any other country; and they are not insensible of their felicity; they will never erect the tree of liberty. They know it by its fruit; the bitter fruit of slavery, of contempt, oppression and poverty to themselves, and probably to their posterity.

If Ireland is the object of invasion, France may flatter herself, perhaps, with the expectation of being more favourably received there than in Great Britain: but I trust she will be equally disappointed in both countries. I mean not to enter into the politics of Ireland; but, considering her as a sister kingdom, I cannot wholly omit adverting to her situation.

I look upon England and Ireland as two bodies which are grown together, with different members and organs of sense, but

nourished by the circulation of the same blood: whilst they continue united they will live and prosper; but if they suffer themselves to be separated by the force or cunning of an enemy; if they quarrel and tear themselves asunder, both will instantly perish. Would to God, that there were equity and moderation enough among the nations of the earth, to suffer small states to enjoy their independence; but the history of the world is little else than the history of great states sacrificing small ones to their avarice or ambition; and the present designs of France, throughout Europe, confirm the observation. If Ireland so far listens to her resentment (however it has originated) against this kingdom; if she so far indulges her chagrin against her own legislature, as to seek for redress by throwing herself into the arms of France, she will be undone, her freedom will be lost, she will be sunk in the scale of nations; instead of flourishing under the protection of a sister that loves her, she will be fettered as a slave to the feet of the greatest despot that ever afflicted human kind—to the feet of French democracy.

Let the mal-contents in every nation of Europe look at Holland, and at Belgium. Holland was an hive of bees; her sons flew on the wings of the wind to every corner of the globe, and returned laden with the sweets of every climate. Belgium was a garden of herbs, the oxen were strong to labour, the fields were thickly covered with the abundance of the harvest.—Unhappy Dutchmen! You will still toil, but not for your own comfort; you will still collect honey, but not for yourselves; France will seize the hive as often as your industry shall have filled it. Ill-judging Belgians! you will no longer eat in security the fruits of your own grounds; France will find occasion, or will make occasion, to participate largely in your riches; it will be more truly said of yourselves than of your oxen, “you plough the fields, but not for your own profit!”

France threatens us with the payment of what she calls a debt of indemnification; and the longer we resist her efforts to subdue us, the larger she says this debt will become; and she tells us, that all Europe knows that

this debt must be paid one time or other—
 And does she think that this flourish will
 frighten us? It ought to move our contempt,
 it ought to fire us with indignation, and,
 above all, it ought to instruct every man
 amongst us what we are to expect, if through
 supineness, cowardice, or division, we suffer
 her mad attempt to prove successful. She
 may not murder or carry into slavery the in-
 habitants of the land; but under the pre-
 tence of indemnification, she will demand
 millions upon tens of millions; she will beg-
 gar every man of property; and reduce the
 lower orders to the condition of her own pea-
 sants and artificers—black bread, onions, and
 water.

France wishes to separate the people from
 the throne; she inveighs, in harsh language,
 against the King, and the cabinet of Saint
 James'; and speaks fairly to the people of the
 land. But the people of the land are too wise
 to give heed to her professions of kindness.
 If there be a people in Europe on whom such
 practices are lost, it is ourselves. All our
 people are far better educated, have far juster

notions of government, far more shrewdness in detecting the designs of those who would mislead them, than the people of any other country have, not excepting Swisserland itself. There is no cause to fear that French hypocrisy should be superior to British sagacity. Let France approach us with the courage of a lion, or with the cunning of a fox, we are equally prepared to meet her ; we can resist her arms, and we can expose her artifice.

France reproaches us with being the tyrants of the ocean ; and we all remember the armed neutrality, which was entered into by the maritime states of Europe during the American war. It originated, as was said, from our assuming a dominion on the seas, which the law of nations did not allow. I cannot enter into the discussion of this question here ; and it is less necessary to do it anywhere, as it has been ably discussed many years ago. I sincerely hope the accusation against us is not just ; for no tyranny either can be, or ought to be lasting. I am an utter enemy to all dominion founded in mere

power, unaccompanied with a just regard to the rights of individuals or nations. Continental states, however, ought to make some allowance for our zeal in claiming, and our energy in maintaining, a superiority at sea; our insular situation gives us a right which they cannot plead; they have fortresses for their defence against their enemies; but fleets are the fortresses of Great Britain.

We wish to preserve our superiority at sea for our own advantage, but other nations are not uninterested in our doing it. If by the voluntary assistance of Spain and Holland, by the constrained concurrence of what was Venice, by the improvident acquiescence of Russia, Sweden, Denmark, and the other naval powers of Europe or America, the trident of the ocean (for some one nation must possess it) should be transferred from Great Britain to France, they will all have cause to lament its having exchanged its master. They may at present think otherwise, and be pleased with the prospect of our humiliation (I speak not this as if I thought that humiliation would happen, for no man has

an higher confidence in our navy than I have) but I speak it with a prophetic warning to those nations, that they may see the error of their politics before it becomes impossible to retrieve it. If France becomes as great by sea as she is become by land, Europe will have no hope, but that her chains may be light.

The channels of commerce, were they open alike to the enterprize of all nations, are so numerous and copious in the four quarters of the globe, that the industry of all the manufacturers in Europe might be fully employed in supplying them. America is doubling her numbers, and will for many years want supplies from the manufactories of Great Britain. Africa will in time civilize her millions, and afford for centuries a market for the commodities of all Europe. What folly is it then in civilized, what wickedness in christian states, to be engaged every ten or twenty years in destroying millions of men, for the protection or the acquisition of arbitrary monopolies?

There still remains another subject which I am most anxious to recommend to your serious consideration—the attempts of bad men to rob you of your religion.

It is now somewhat more than seventy years, since certain men who esteemed themselves philosophers, and who, unquestionably, were men of talents, began in different parts of the continent, but especially in France and Germany, to attack the christian religion. The design has been carried on by them and others, under various denominations, from that time to the present hour. In order to accomplish their end, they have published an infinity of books, some of them distinguished by wit and ridicule, unbecoming the vast importance of the subject, and all stuffed with false quotations and ignorant or designed misrepresentations of scripture, or filled with objections against human corruptions of faith, and for which Christianity cannot be accountable.

A similar attempt, I have reason to believe, has for some years been carrying on amongst

ourselves, and by the same means. Irreligious pamphlets have been circulated with great industry, sold at a small price, or given away to the lowest of the people, in every great town in the kingdom. The profane style of these pamphlets is suited to the taste of the wicked, and the confident assertions which they contain are well calculated to impose on the understanding of the unlearned; and it is among the wicked and the ignorant that the enemies of religion and government are endeavouring to propagate their tenets.

It is here supposed that the enemies of religion are also the enemies of government; but this must be understood with some restriction. There are, it may be said, many deists in this country, who are sensible of the advantages of a regular government, and who would be as unwilling as the most orthodox believers in the kingdom, that our own should be overturned—this may be true—but it is true also, that they who wish to overthrow the government are not only, generally speaking, unbelievers themselves, but that they found their hopes of success in the infidelity

of the common people. They are sensible that no government can long subsist, if the bulk of the people have no reverence for a supreme being, no fear of perjury; no apprehension of futurity, no check from conscience; and foreseeing the rapine, devastation, and bloodshed, which usually attend the last convulsions of a state struggling for its political existence, they wish to prepare proper actors for this dreadful catastrophe, by brutalizing mankind; for it is by religion more than by any other principle of human nature, that men are distinguished from brutes.

The mass of the people has, in all ages and countries, been the mean of effectuating great revolutions, both good and bad. The physical strength of the bulk of a nation is irresistible, but it is incapable of self-direction. It is the instrument which wise, brave, and virtuous men use for the extinction of tyranny, under whatever form of government it may exist; and it is the instrument also, which men of bad morals, desperate fortunes, and licentious principles, use for the subversion of every government, however just in

its origin, however equitable in its administration, however conducive to the ends for which society has been established among mankind. It is against the machinations of these men, secret or open, solitary or associated, that I wish to warn you; they will first attempt to persuade you that there is nothing after death, no heaven for the good, no hell for the wicked, that there is no God, or none who regards your actions; and when you shall be convinced of this, they will think you properly prepared to perpetrate every crime which may be necessary for the furtherance of their own designs, for the gratification of their ambition, their avarice, or their revenge.

No civil, no ecclesiastical constitution can be so formed by human wisdom as to admit of no improvement upon an increase of wisdom; as to require no alteration when an alteration in the knowledge, manners, opinions, and circumstances of a people has taken place. But men ought to have the modesty to know for what they are fitted, and the discretion to confine their exertions to

subjects of which they have a competent knowledge.

There is perhaps little difference in the strength of memory, in the acuteness of discernment, in the solidity of judgement, in any of the intellectual powers on which knowledge depends, between a statesman and a manufacturer, between the most learned divine and a mechanic: the chief difference consists in their talents being applied to different subjects. All promote both the public good, and their own, when they act within their proper spheres, and all do harm to themselves, and others, when they go out of them. You would view with contempt a statesman, who should undertake to regulate a great manufactory without having been brought up to business; or a divine, who should become a mechanic without having learned his trade; but is not a mechanic, or manufacturer, still more mischievous and ridiculous, who affects to become a statesman, or to solve the difficulties which occur in divinity? Now this is precisely what the men I am cautioning you against wish you to do—they harangue you on the disorders of

our constitution, and propose remedies; they propound to you subtilties in metaphysics and divinity, and desire you to explain them; and because you are not prepared to do this, or to answer all their objections to our government, they call upon you to reject religion, natural and revealed, as impostures, and to break up the constitution of the country, as an enormous mass of incurable corruption.

No one, I trust, will suspect the writer of contending that great abuses in church or state ought to be perpetuated, or of wishing that any one dogma of our holy religion should not be discussed with decent freedom (for the more religion is tried, the more it will be refined;) but he does contend that the faith of unlearned christians ought not to be shaken by lies and blasphemies; he does contend that it is better to tolerate abuses, till they can be reformed by the counsels of the wisest and the best men in the kingdom, than to submit the removal of them to the frothy frequenters of ale-houses, to the discontented declaimers against our establishment, to the miserable dregs of the nation who seek for distinction in public

confusion. An ancient fabrick may by mere force be defaced and thrown down; but it requires the knowledge and caution of an architect to beautify and repair it. You are sensible that the most ingenious piece of mechanism may be spoiled by the play of a child, or broken to pieces by the blow of an idiot or a madman; and can you think that the machine of government, the most ingenious and complicated of all others, may not at once be despoiled of all its elegance, and deprived of all its functions, by the rude and bungling attempts of the unskilful to amend its motion?

I have not time to lay before you the rise and progress of that infidelity with respect to revealed religion—of that scepticism with respect to natural religion—of that insanity with respect to government, which have, by their combined influence overwhelmed with calamity one of the mightiest states in Europe, and which menace with destruction every other. I have not time to shew you by detailed quotations from the writings of the French and German philosophers—that

the superstition of the church of Rome made them infidels—that a misapprehension of the extent of human knowledge made them sceptics—and that the tyranny of the continental governments made them enemies of all government, except of that silly system of democratic liberty and equality, which never has had, nor ever can have a permanent establishment amongst mankind.

Though I cannot, in this short and general address, enter fully or deeply into these matters, I may be allowed to say to these philosophers—how has it happened that men of your penetration, in shunning one vice, have fallen, like fools, into its opposite? Does it follow that Jesus Christ wrought no miracles, because the church of Rome has pretended to work many? Does it follow that the apostles were not honest men, because there have been priests, bishops and Popes who were hypocrites? Is the christian religion to be ridiculed as more absurd than paganism, to be vilified as less credible than mahometanism, to be represented as impious and abominable, because men, in opposition to every precept of Christ, and to every prac-

tice of the apostles, have worshipped images, prayed to dead men, believed in transubstantiation, granted indulgencies, erected inquisitions, and roasted honest men alive for not complying with their superstition?

With respect to natural religion, I would say to them—you complain that you cannot comprehend the creation of the universe, nor the providence of God; and is this your want of ability to become as wise as your maker a reason for doubting whether there ever was a creation, and whether there is a providence? What should you think of a nest of reptiles, which, being immured in a dark corner of one of the lowest apartments of a magnificent house, should affect to argue against the house having ever been built, or its being then taken care of. You are those reptiles with respect to your knowledge of the time when God created, and the manner in which he still takes care of the world.—You cannot, you tell us, reconcile the omniscience of God with the freedom of man—is this a reason for your doubting of the freedom which you feel you possess, or of the power of God to under-

stand the nature of what he has made?—You cannot comprehend how it is possible for an immaterial being to be acted upon by material organs of sense—will you therefore deny the existence of your soul as a substance distinct from your body? do you not perceive that it must equally surpass your understanding how matter, acting upon matter, can produce any thing but motion; can give rise to perception, thought, will, memory, to all those intellectual powers, by which arts and sciences are invented and indefinitely improved?

With respect to government, I would say to them—admitting that there is a natural equality amongst mankind, does it follow that there may not be, or that there ought not to be, an instituted inequality? Admitting that men, before they enter into society, are free from the dominion of each other, does it follow that they may not voluntarily relinquish the liberty of a state of nature, in order that they may enjoy the comfort and obtain the security of a state of society? Can there be no just government, because there is and has been much oppression in the world, no poli-

tical freedom in Great Britain, because there was, during the monarchy, little in France; where there is, probably, still less than there was? Does it follow that there ought to be no distinctions in society, with respect to rank or riches, because there are none in a state of nature; though nature herself has made a great difference amongst the individuals of our species as to health, strength, judgment, genius, as to all those powers which, either in a state of nature or society, necessarily become the causes and occasions of the superiority of one man over another? Does it follow that rich men ought to be plundered, and men of rank degraded, because a few may be found in every state who have abused their pre-eminence, or misapplied their wealth? In a word, does it follow that there ought to be no religion, no government, no subordination amongst men because religion may degenerate into superstition, government into tyranny, and subordination into slavery?--- As reasonably might it be argued, that there ought to be no wine, because some men may become drunkards; no meat, because some men may become gluttons; no air, no fire,

no water, because these natural sources of general felicity may accidentally become instruments of partial calamity ?

He who peruses with attention the works of those foreigners, who for the last seventy or eighty years have written against revealed or natural religion, and compares them with the writings of our English deists towards the end of the last and the beginning or middle of the present century, will perceive that the former have borrowed all their arguments and objections from the latter ; he will perceive also that they are far inferior to them in learning and acuteness, but that they surpass them in ridicule, in audacity, in blasphemy, in misrepresentation, in all the miserable arts by which men are wont to defend a bad cause ; they surpass them too in their mischievous endeavours to disseminate their principles amongst those who, from their education, are least qualified to refute their sophistry,

Justly may we call their reasoning sophistry, since it was not able to convince even them-

selves. One of the most eminent of them, (Voltaire) who had been a theist, a materialist, a disbeliever of a future state all his days, asked with evident anxiety a few years before his death, Is there a God such as men speak of? Is there a soul such as people imagine? Is there any thing to hope for after death? He seems to have been consistent in nothing, but in his hatred of that gospel which would have enlightened the obscurity in which he was involved, and at once dissipated all his doubts. As to his notions of government, he appears to have been as unsettled in them as in his religious sentiments; for though he had been one of the most zealous apostles of liberty and equality, though he had attacked monarchical governments in all his writings with great bitterness, yet he at last confessed to one of the greatest princes then in Europe, "that he did not love the government of the lowest orders—that he did not wish the re-establishment of Athenian democracy."

Such are the inconsistencies of men who, by their profane disputation against religion,

have disturbed the consciences of individuals; who, by their senseless railing against government, have endangered the tranquillity of every nation in Europe! And it is against such men I warn you.

Are any of you oppressed with poverty, disease, and wretchedness? Let none of these men beguile you of your belief that “God is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him,”—“the protector of them that trust in him.”—Are any of you afflicted in mind, despairing of mercy through the multitude of your sins? Let none of these men stagger your persuasion that the gospel is true; for therein you will read that “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners”—repent, and the gospel will give you consolation. Are any of you prosperous in your circumstances, and easy in your consciences? Let none of these men, by declaiming against defects in our constitution, or abuses in government, betray you into an opinion that were the present order of things overturned, a better might, by their counsels, be established; for, by their coun-

fels, you would either be plundered of your property, or compelled to become their accomplices in impiety and iniquity. See what has happened in France to all orders, to the common people as well as to the nobility. “ The little finger of their republic has become thicker, more oppressive to the whole nation, than the loins of their monarchy; “ they were chastised with whips, they are “ chastised with scorpions.”

I am not altogether insensible of the danger I may have incurred, (should matters come to extremity) by thus publicly addressing my countrymen. I might have concealed my sentiments, and waited in retirement, till the struggle had been over, and the issue known; but I disdain safety accompanied with dishonour. When Hannibal is at the gates, who but a poltroon would listen to the timid counsels of neutrality, or attempt to screen himself from the calamity coming on his country, by skulking as a vagabond amid the mountains of Wales or of Westmoreland? I am ready, and I am persuaded that I entertain a just confidence in saying,

that hundreds of thousands of loyal and honest men are as ready as I am, to hazard every thing in defence of the country.

I pray God to influence the hearts of both sides to good will, moderation, and peace: to grant to our enemy grace to return to a due sense of piety and a belief in uncorrupted Christianity; and to impress our own minds with a serious sense of the necessity of so repenting of our sins, and so reforming our lives, as may enable us to hope for his protection against all enemies, foreign and domestic.

R. LANDAFF.

London,
Jan. 20, 1798

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